The Impact of COVID-19 on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Caribbean countries

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Focus points of the presentation

- General information
- What are the main impacts of the pandemic from a registry point of view?
- What are the innovations or changes implemented by the countries in order to cushion the impacts?
- Is it possible to compare the total number of deaths in the first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?
- Is there a possibility to compare the total number of births in the ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?
- Is there a possibility to compare the total number of marriages in the first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?
- Is there a possibility to compare the total number of divorces in the first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?
- Can the civil registry and vital statistics system generate statistics based on both on the date of occurrence and on the date of registration?
- Are the civil registry and vital statistics system digitized?

General information

- Country: Suriname with Paramaribo as Capital
- Surface area: 163.820 km^2
- Borders: Atlantic Ocean in the North, Brazil in the South, Guyana in the West and French Guyana in the East
- Population 2019: (MYE_NSO: 598.000)
- 10 districts divided in 62 sub districts ("ressorten")
- Civil Registry Office (CRO) is lead by a Director and the bureau falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- There is 1 Head Office located in Paramaribo and 42 branch offices spread out over the various districts.

Main impacts of the pandemic from a registry point of view / Innovations / Changes and Protocols

1) Suriname has been coping with the presence of COVID since March 2020.

2) From out of the Government specific protocols were to be implemented:

- Only essential services where to be operational

- Create a work environment where personnel works in shifts at the office and from home. In order to avoid unnecessary contact with large groups of people (ideal less then 5 persons in 1 room)

- Work in non air-conditioned rooms when there are more people present

- Wear facemasks when in contact with others, keep social distance of 1.5-2meters, no handshakes and sanitize hands as often as needed

- Protective shields were placed in offices where visitors (citizens) come for registry purposes

3) Some services were put on hold for certain periods because of shortage of staff (making of E ID's e.g)

4) Shorter working hours during the week and no registry anymore on Saturdays (till further notice)

5) (Overall) Stagnation in the delivery of documents and certain registry services

6) In cases where a COVID positive tested person was present, the office was closed for at least 2 days for de-contamination purposes

7) Most of the changes because of COVID sometimes resulted in inflexible and unpleasant situations and services to visitors (citizens) who came to the CRO for registry purposes. (e.g. shortage of staff, long waiting periods)

Possibilities for comparison of variables for "the *first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020"*

- *the total number of deaths*
- *the total number of births*
- *the total number of marriages*
- *the total number of divorces*

The CRO publishes an annual report "Demographic Data" and the most recent version (released November 2020) regards data over 2019. The above mentioned variables are standard indicators that are taken up in the report. Registry at the CRO is an essential part (mandatory) of formalized status regarding the above mentioned indicators.

It is safe to say that the comparison will be possible between the 2 years, but take into account possible stagnation in the collection and processing of the data (especially receiving data from the more distant branches).

Under normal circumstances the annual report is released around June / July. COVID is (one of) the main reason(s) for a (very) late release.

Can the civil registry and vital statistics system generate statistics based on both on the date of occurrence and on the date of registration?
Until now the CRO has produced data on a yearly basis. Generating statistics based on date of occurrence and date of registration is quite challenging also because of the decentralized system we have.

Are the civil registry and vital statistics system digitized? Yes, partially. Most of the branches have a digitized system regarding general registry requests. The information is, for a small fee, printed on request. Official documents like death certificate, birth certificate, family book etc. are still in written form. Photo copies are made on request.
The different branches have their own digitized system and the planning is to have a full digitized central network system that is accessible for all CRO branches. But this plan has not been realized yet.

The problem with the decentralized system is that persons can basically only have access to their information if they visit the branch where they are registered. With a central network you can get access at any branch.

Suriname, November 30th 2020

COVID total positive tested: 5.312
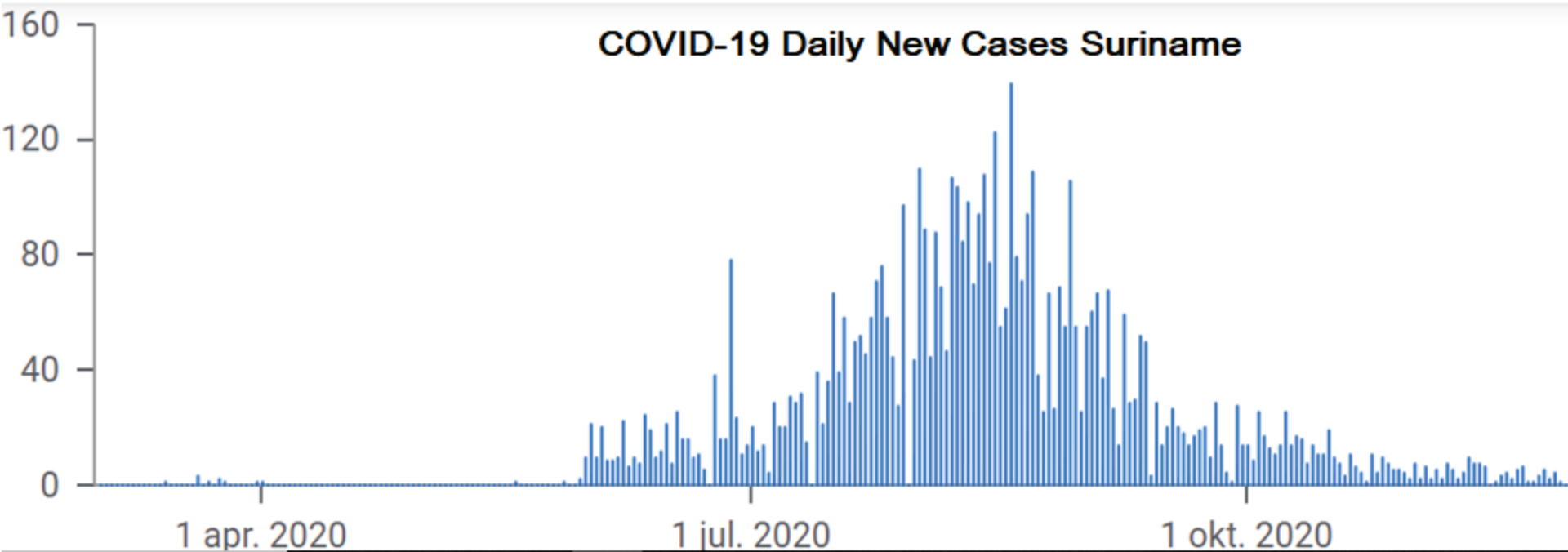
COVID cured/recovered: 5.193

Deaths due to COVID: 117

Active cases: 7

New cases last 24hrs: 0

WE ARE SLOWLY BUT SURELY GETTING BACK TO NORMAL. GOOD DEVELOPMENTS!!

COVID-19 Daily New Cases Suriname

The End

Be Safe and Thank You.

Note: the presenters are still waiting on inputs from staff from the CRO (if received, the info will be incorporated in the presentation afterwards)